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FOR
A SMALL PARISH
IN
NEWFOUNDLAND;
A
PLAIN SERMON
TO
A PLAIN PEOPLE.

BY
REV. W. MEEKE.

Preached by the Author, at St. George's Church in this City, and with
his diffident consent, published by one of the congregation.

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A BRAIN PROBLEM

REV. W. W. WELCH

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S E R M O N
BY THE
REV. W. MEEKE.

"BUT THIS I SAY BRETHREN, THE TIME IS SHORT."
1 Cor. chap. 7, verse 29.

"But this I say Brethren, the Time is short." In these few, striking, and affecting words, does St. Paul seek to impress the transient nature of all the relationships, possessions, and pursuits of man. He had been writing to the Corinthians, about the lawfulness and expediency of forming connexions by marriage in the then existing state of the Church; in answer to enquiries, which had been made of him on the subject, by the Christians to whom he was writing. In the text, he breaks off from the topic before him, and the consideration of present circumstances, relationships, and interests; solemnly to remind them of the brevity and speedy conclusion of all earthly things. "But this I say, he exclaims with affectionate abruptness—the time is short;" whatever connexions, are now formed, must very soon terminate. "It remains that both they that have wives, be as though they had none, and they that weep, as though they wept not, and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not, and they that buy, as though they possessed not, and they that use this World, as not abusing it, for the fashion of this World passeth away." It is but a short time we have to live below, and it

will soon be of no consequence, what relationships we have entered into; What Houses we have had; What share in the business, and profits of the World; for even the World itself passeth away, its fashions and its plans are all fast drawing towards a close.

My Brethren, it is necessary for ourselves, that we be frequently reminded of this solemn truth, in order that we think less of Earthly things and more of such as are heavenly; that we may be very moderate in our pursuit and enjoyment of temporal blessings; that we may esteem everything we have, as only lent us for a short space, to be used and improved, and that we should seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness—"the things that are above where Christ sitteth at God's right hand for evermore."

"The time is short." This solemn truth may be established in whatever aspect it is presented to us. And first let us view it in its relation to, and comparison with Eternity.

What is Time? The space we measure by hours—and days—and months—and years! nearly six thousand years, thus measured, have passed away, since Time began its rounds; how many yet remain, before it shall close, is a secret unrevealed to human enquiry. But the hour is fast drawing on, when the angel shall stand with one foot on the Earth, and the other on the Sea, and swear "by him that liveth forever and ever"—that there shall be Time no longer. And suppose it to last as long as it has already lasted; yet put it all in comparison with Eternity, and what will it amount to? For what is Eternity? Sit down and calculate—measure its duration. Is it, 10,000 years?—Is it, 10,000,000?—Is it ten millions of millions?—Count

every grain of sand on the sea-shore ; suppose each to be a year, or a million of years ; put them all together ; tell up the vast amount ; still you will make no approach to a conception of Eternity,—to one conceivable atom of its duration. What does this view reduce the whole duration of Time to in the comparison ?—To a speck—to a moment—to a span—to nothing. One day, is, with the Lord, as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. What is Time to him who is the author of it ? He is from everlasting to everlasting !” Here then in the view taken, the language of the text is strictly applicable ! The Time is short !

Sec. The Time of *Life* is short.

In the early Ages of the World, the lives of men were of much longer duration than they have been since that period ! Men lived more hundreds of years then, than at present, the oldest amongst us live tens. Methuseleh lived 969 years, yet at the end of his term—even his life ; it was doubtless viewed by him as but a short space ! At the usual period when we all die, the ancients were only just beginning to enter on life. Jacob at the age of 130 years, declared to Pharaoh, that, few and evil had been the days of the years of his life, and that he had not attained unto the days of the years of the life of his fathers, in the days of their Pilgrimage. What then must we say of our brief 60 or 70 years—if we last so long, which very few do—but that the time is indeed short !—fearfully, affectingly, alarmingly short ! And when added to this we take into account the fact that half the world die before they are seven years old ;—that multitudes are cut down in the bloom of youth—in the midst of life, at every stage, and under every circumstance ; often in the midst of life without a moment’s warning ; as well by some sudden stroke, some unforeseen accident, as by slow and wasting disease : take, I say, these

circumstances into consideration, and the text comes home to us with a solemn force and meaning,—“This I say, brethren, the time is short.”

Thirdly. The time, the brief time of our existence on earth, is short, if compared with many objects around us. The works of art, the ancient castles, the venerable cathedrals, built by hands long since mouldered into dust—still survive! The Pyramids of Egypt, half as old as the world itself, still exist! The same sun which shone on Adam, shines on us! The same stars which glittered in Eden, still spangle the skies! Yea, even our own houses outlast us; and many a hand which cut the trees, and raised the timbers which shelter some of us, is long since still in the grave; and many of these buildings, frail as they are, will still outlast us, and be occupied by other tenants, while we occupy a narrow coffin and a gloomy grave.

Fourthly. The time is short with reference to the great and infinitely important work we all have to do. Yes, brethren, I repeat it,—viewed in this connexion it is fearfully short. For why were we sent into this world? Was it merely to eat, and to drink, and sleep, and build, and plant, and amuse ourselves, and toil, and suffer, and die? Oh no! life is not ended here!—our existence is not confined to, or limited with these particulars; there is not one of us, who is not born to spend a long eternity, either in inconceivable blessedness in heaven; or in tremendous misery and punishment in hell; and the few brief years—or days, bestowed upon us now, are given us to secure the former, and to escape the latter; To work out our own salvation; To lay hold on eternal life; To obtain the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus; a mansion in the skies; a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Now we all know, that in earthly things,—he who has but a short time to accomplish an important object, will not foolishly waste the invaluable moments. A man who has but a week, or a month to work, in order to secure food—or fortune—or the maintenance of his family for a whole year; will be early up, and late take rest, and diligent in seizing every minute; call him away to a song, or a dance, he will not listen to you; he must work, or lose all; he knows how much depends on the fleeting hour; he has no time for trifles, for pleasure, for any thing, but to finish his work, and secure his object. I must work the work of him that sent me, said the Saviour, while it is day, the night cometh, when no man can work. Yes, Brethren, the night cometh—the gloomy night of death! Repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the corresponding effects of holiness in heart and life, is the great absorbing work, we all have to do; and the few brief hours of life, is all the time appointed us, for it to be done in! I say then, the time is short; so short, that *if you mean to be happy for ever, you have not a single hour to lose!*

Once more, the time is short—for much of it, too much, is already gone. While we have been thinking and planning for the future,—that future has become the past—and now, though we are perhaps still dreaming of what is to succeed, to take place next, in the year to come, or even at a still more distant period; one—and another,—and another is laid by us in the grave, and our own time is becoming fearfully shorter; silently the stream of time passes over our heads; we see it not; we hear it not; we know it not; we only know that it is gone. The winter, we were so anxious to provide for is over; the summer we arranged about, is already on its way; other plans are in our minds, other

prospects cheer or sadden our view ; but all along the time is getting shorter. A few more days, or hours, and all will be ended. The grave will open ; the earth return to its earth ; the ashes to their kindred ashes ; the dust to its native dust ; The soul to judgment, to God, to eternity, to Heaven, or to Hell. The text introduced to your notice ; addresses itself with solemn earnestness, to several classes and descriptions of persons ; and first to the young.

This, I say to you, the time is short ; Children ! you have just emerged from childhood ; you have just learnt to read the Bible ; you think of little besides play and amusement ; and some giddy trifle, which will be no sooner obtained, than forgotten. Now the text says, the time is short. You have a soul, which will never die ; you are a sinner ; you may soon die ; you will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. You must give a strict account of your time, of your words, of your thoughts, of your sins : you will soon, if you live, be employed with the cares and business of life. Now is your time to learn, to think, to read, to become like Samuel, like Timothy, like the youthful Saviour. But the time is short, there is none to be lost. Be wiser, be better, be diligent, say no bad words, tell no stories, watch over your tongues, your temper, avoid bad company, read the bible, strictly observe the sabbath, pray earnestly, be ready for the worst, lest like many other children, you die while you are young, and your short time be all ended, before you have begun to any purpose to live.

And you who have advanced further in life, who have passed already, eighteen, twenty, thirty years. You are entering, or have entered, into the business of life ; the buying and selling, the building and planting, the feeding and clothing, the hoping and fearing ; the thousand cares of life,

are either opening before, or pressing upon you. But the text says, solemnly ; the time is short, all will soon be over. What you now think most about, will soon be, as though it had never been. A year to a man is not more than three months to a child. A few more rising and setting suns, and then death, eternity, and heaven, or hell. Yes! whatever you do, do it with all your might ; for there is no work, nor device, nor wisdom, nor knowledge in the grave whither thou goest, and the happiness or misery of eternal ages, hang dependant on the use or abuse of this brief space of present time and opportunity.

To the aged and advanced in years ; the text says, the time is short, yes, very short, only a few brief days at most now remain. The house you now dwell in must soon have another inhabitant. The friends you now behold, you must soon cease to look upon. The body you now move in, must soon be a lifeless heap of dust. Oh seize the present hour, make your calling and election sure, repent of every sin, believe the Gospel, confess the only saviour, rely on his atoning blood, secure for yourself eternal life, immortal bliss, unfading glory.

To the wicked, young or old, high or low, rich or poor ; the text says, God himself says, the time is short ; yes, swear if you will ; yes, drink if you will ; yes steal if you will ; yes, break the Sabbath if you will ; yes dare to live without religion, without repentance, or prayer, or Faith, but remember, the time is short, you shall not do so much longer. Death at any rate will stop you, if nothing else does. If you will not, after, all that is told you. If after having the Bible, the Sabbath, the Church, days and months and years, given you to seek for heaven, and flee from hell ; you will not do so, why then you must only take your choice ;

you must have your own perverse way ; you must sin on your few short days, and you know when these are all gone, what you have to expect, and what you deserve.

Lastly—To the righteous, this I say, Brethren, the time is short ! Whatever sorrows now trouble you. Whatever temptations now assail you. Whatever sickness, pain, disappointment, trials, now oppress you, yet the time is short ! Sorrow will soon be exchanged for joy, pain for pleasure, death; for life, earth, for heaven, this short time; for a never ending eternity. O then, gird up the loins of your mind. Be sober, and hope to the end. Press toward the mark, or the prize ; and soon the bright day of immortal, unspeakable, Celestial glory, shall burst on your astonished vision ; and transport your happy ransomed soul ; and the high Hallelujah's of the skies, shall greet your immortal ears.